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Picture Talk Again

FOLLOWING closely the hurricane success of "Gone With The Wind", we learn that Walt Disney's production "Pinnochio", released by RKO-Radio, had its opening at the Center Theatre, Radio City, Wed., Feb. 7th. Advance campaigns on this picture have been going on for months all of which creates a tremendous box-office interest, but which also creates a standard of value which the picture must have when it is finally presented.

The bigger the build-up the bigger must be the appeal. Word reaches us that the critics unanimously agree that "Pinnochio" is a greater picture than "Snow White". As good would have been enough, but greater indicates that even a genius can be greater at times than he is at other times; and while genius never lets one down because genius is always sincere, there are times when the results of creative effort can be classified as good, better, best. "Pinnochio" is best.

Canada will have an opportunity to judge for itself for it looks like an Easter opening for "Pinnochio".

Other big pictures coming along are "Blue Bird", the Shirley Temple Twentieth-Century Fox adaptation of the world famous Maeterlinck story of Happiness; Twentieth-Century Fox's "Little Old New York"; United Artists "Rebecca"; RKO-Radio's "Swiss Family Robinson"; Paramount's, "Seventeen" and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's "Young Tom Edison"; not overlooking "Grapes of Wrath", in which we are told there is a story as compelling as the book, but with some of the unpalatable bits eliminated.

These pictures are all in line for special premiere showings reminiscent of the old days when a premiere showing was an event; and the atmosphere prologues or presentations ran into many thousands.

Today, the show's the thing by way of merchandising, the big show is directed not to stage presentation, but in publicising and advertising the big show; and letting the picture live up to the advance publicity given to it.

We had this kind of publicity with "Gone With The Wind". The picture opened at Loew's, Toronto, two weeks ago; and we understand that tickets have been sold in advance for five weeks. One dollar sixty-five top for reserved seats is the price, with morning shows, matinee, a total of three shows a day. The morning and afternoon shows have no reserved seats, the price is seventy-five cents.

"Gone With The Wind" has upset the whole schedules of pictures here at Toronto, for no one knows how long the picture will remain. It may mean that your good neighborhood houses will get first runs, that is a certainty if the big pictures already made, and those to come have extended runs.

We know of no better picture publicity, no better stimulus to picture interest than the big pictures; and certainly we were in need of such a stimulant, for the picture business was rapidly degenerating into Giveaways with the Giveaway unquestionably the attraction to get the patrons into the theatre. Once again a picture patronage is talking stars and motion pictures and the public as well as the picture industry as a whole will benefit.

Study the history of the motion picture and you will find that in the darkest hour of its defeat something happens to give it the necessary lift to popular heights and to prosperity.

—Editor.

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ALLIED EXHIBITORS' MEET AT HALIFAX

Halifax, N.S. — A meeting of the Allied Exhibitors' Association of Nova Scotia was held recently at Halifax, W. H. Cuzner, Sydney Mines, presiding. Among those attending were: A. J. Mason, Springhill, N.S.; N. W. Mason, New Glasgow, N.S.; Frank Sobey, Stellarton, N.S.; Fred Gregor, New Waterford, N.S.; W. O. Bligh, Berwick; H. E. Gates, Shubenacadie; Starr McLeod, Whitney Pier, N.S., as well as the Halifax exhibitors. Among other matters discussed was the Bill 92 which has been printed in the Nova Scotia book of Theatre Regulations.

CAPITOL REDECORATED

Welland, Ont. — Work is underway at the Capitol Theatre on a program of redecoration which will entail an expenditure of approximately $11,000. The work is being done during the night and mornings and does not necessitate the closing of the house.

SPONSOR "SLIM" GORDON

Regina, Sask. — Capitol Theatre here is sponsoring an entry in the International Bowling Congress at Cleveland in February. A "star" of the team is H. R. "Slim" Gordon, Capital projectionist.

ROXY SUNDAY CONCERT

Yorkshire, Sask. — Roxy Theatre here was turned over to the Civic Service Club Band for a Sunday concert recenty in aid of the Yorkton Benevolent Society.

"CHIN UP" IN REGINA

Regina, Sask. — Word received in Regina from W. Leonard Howe, advance agent, says that the "Chin Up", wartime revue produced by Globe and Mail movie editor Roly Young, will play Regina soon, possibly in the Darke Hall.

SPECIAL PIONEER CLUB COMMITTEE MEETS

Toronto, Ont. — The first meeting of the Provisional Committee of the Canadian Pioneer Pictures Club was held on Thursday afternoon at the office of Clair Hague, Chairman of the Committee.

Those who attended the meeting included: Louis Rosenfeld, Herbert Allen, Haskell Masters, Leo Devaney, Sam Sternberg, Ed Wells, Ben Cronk and Ray Lewis. A wire was received from Syd Taube explaining that he was unexpectedly called to Montreal and would therefore be absent from the meeting.

WIN "PREMIER" AWARDS

Toronto, Ont. — W. R. Watt, manager of the Capitol Theatre, Kingston, and S. L. Burton, manager of the Strand Theatre, Port Colborne, won the monthly awards given by Premier Theatres to the managers for best work in exploitation.

Conducted by Jack Meltzer under the Idea Exchange Dept. the awards are based on the score system, the manager awarded the greatest number of points for his work, wins the award.

OPEN BEAVER HALL SWETMAN IN CHARGE

Toronto, Ont. — Canada's High Commissioner to England, The Honourable Vincent Massey, has issued invitations to the formal opening of Beaver Hall, London. Mr. Swetman, who managed the Community Hall at Kapuskasing, Ont., will be acting supervisor of this hall for Canadian soldiers overseas.

REINHORN IN REGINA

Regina, Sask. — Recent visitors to the film exchange offices in Winnipeg was I. Reinhorn, manager of the Roxy Theatre, Regina.

SOCIAL HYGIENE DAY TIE-UP "DAMAGED GOODS"

Saskatchewan, Sask. — By special arrangement with J. H. Allen, of Grand National Films, Winnipeg, and Harry W. Hurwitz, manager of the Tivoli Theatre, the film "Damaged Goods" was shown here for three mornings. The film was shown as part of the social hygiene education program of the Young Men's Board of Trade which got underway with the observance of Social Hygiene Day on February 1.

Audience on the first day was general, on the second morning it was restricted to women and girls only, and on the third day the audience was general.

Joseph Lichstein, chairman of the social research committee Y.M.B.T., commended the spirit in which Messrs. Allen and Hurwitz made the film available.

HUFFMAN HONOURED

Belleville, Ont. — The staff of the Belle Theatre here, presented a fountain pen to Mr. Chester Huffman, formerly of the Belle Theatre and now with the R.C.A.F.

HOLD "FRANCE IS READY"

Saskatoon, Sask. — House record of the Roxy Theatre here was broken by "France Is Ready". Picture had to be held over a second week.

TREASURER RECOVERING

Regina, Sask. — Operated on in a Regina hospital, Miss Lenore Williams, treasurer of the Capitol Theatre, has been away from work for a number of days. She is now well on the road to recovery. During her absence Miss Marjorie Hawe, of the Capitol staff, took over her duties.

Photographed at the first luncheon meeting of the Canadian Pioneer Pictures Club, Royal York Hotel, Toronto. From left to right: Syd Taube, Walter Kennedy, Harry Ginsler, Archie Laurie, Sam Glazer, Herb Allen, Jim O'Loughlin, Leo Devaney, Oscar Hanson, Ray Lewis, Louis Rosenfeld, Fred Pursel, Haskell Masters. Inner circle: Hyman Rotenberg, Sam Sternberg, Jake Smith, Clair Hague, Ben Cronk and Charlie Stephenson.

RAY PRESENTS

THERE have been divided opinions concerning the Neely anti-block and blind booking bill ever since Senator Neely first introduced his bill. Last summer despite strong opposition the Senate passed the Neely Bill and the bill is now before the U.S. Congress.

There are not a large number of exhibitors in Canada fully informed as to the clauses in the Neely Bill although it has been said that the Independent Exhibitors are in favour of it hoping that any benefits which it may have will accrue to Canada.

The Digest questioned some Independent Exhibitors on the Neely Bill and these frankly admitted that they were more concerned with the question of "Clearance" and "Protection" than they were with the Neely Bill. No exhibitor to whom I have spoken in the course of many years was opposed to buying a block of pictures. Several objected to buying short subjects claiming it was impossible to utilize many Short Subjects due to double bills and the length of programs. Most exhibitors were anxious to get contracts for blocks of pictures, buying on the strength of trademarks. The chief concern or competition was the "run" and the next concern the price. Exhibitors have always been in the habit of overbuying rather than underbuying; and it is a known fact that some exhibitors deliberately buy up more programs than they can possibly use in order to keep the product or its run away from another theatre in their zone. This policy of doing business is not restricted to chain houses but is indulged in by independent exhibitors out to get their opposition.

I HAVE not been an exhibitor very long, but have learned during that one year of exhibitor-operation that it is impossible to always pick your winners, for some of your best bets flop at the box-office for various reasons, extended runs, bad weather, bad war news, and due to the fact that the people in your particular neighborhood do not like the star or the story.

What we all know is that there is an average quality, that people like stars whose names they know, that pictures can be milked before they reach your theatre regardless of their box-office appeal, but under normal conditions which excludes blizzards and heat waves, any picture which has star appeal, that has quality in its production and a trademark back of it can be booked without the exhibitor feeling that he is taking a great gamble, providing always that the price is right. If you watch the presentations at the first-run theatres, and their affiliated houses, you will observe that even these Big Exhibitors do not always know how to pick the winners, they put the pictures in and pull them out, they top-bill them and then give them second billing — no one in this business is so smart that he always is right.

Take production as a yardstick by which we measure the knowledge of showmanship. Do you believe that directors and producers start out to make a bad picture, to invest their money and effort in a story which the public will designate as a "stinker"?

For every good picture made there are at least six poor ones and six passable, which is giving the benefit of the percentage to the producers. Dealing in personalities and not manufactured goods makes the result of effort always problematical. If it was all in the can, like canned salmon, or tomatoes one would select a good fish, or a couple of nicely ripe tomatoes, plus a clean and efficient canning process and know for a certainty that the opened can would be appetizing. But stars and players, producers and directors are not fish or tomatoes, although many have been called "poor fish", so much depends on how they feel, their state of health and state of mind, not overlooking how the picture patron feels. There is no doubt about what the picture patron wants for his or her little money paid at the box-office, they want more for that twenty-five cents than they expect to get anywhere or from anyone else in the world.

I HAVE watched dozens of people in Florida throw twenty-five and fifty cents into a slot machine and walk away not expecting to get anything. Ask them why they throw away money and they reply, "Just for fun". You who are exhibitors in neighborhood districts know that none of your patrons throw away twenty-five cents at your box-office, you know that if they have seen the picture after seeing your news reel, short subject and perhaps one of the features, they come and tell you that they have seen your top picture and expect their money back; and since the customer is always right it means money back without argument, or a pass. Motion Picture patrons are spoiled children and we have done the spoiling.

But to return to the clauses of the Neely Bill, Sec. 3 (I), which deals with the selling of pictures as between the distributor and exhibitor. Should the Neely Bill become U.S. law the whole business of selling and buying pictures would have to be revised. It restrains the distributor, from leasing or offering to lease in a block or group of two or more films, to require the exhibitor to lease all such films or permit him to lease none, it then proceeds to govern price for the group or block, or for separate pictures, or a group where there is any relationship between the price for one or the group, etc. We know that exhibitors buying a top picture or percentage picture have used this as an argument for getting the lower bracket group at a lower price. This is to be illegal. Clause (2) reads, "It shall be unlawful for any person knowingly to transport or cause to be transported in commerce any motion picture film which is leased, or intended to be leased in violation of subdivision (I) of this section.

Section 4. Deals with production. The clause makes it unlawful for any distributor of a motion picture film over two thousand feet in length

(Continued on Page 7)

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"Which would you choose . . . your sister's shame or your own disgrace?"

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BRIAN
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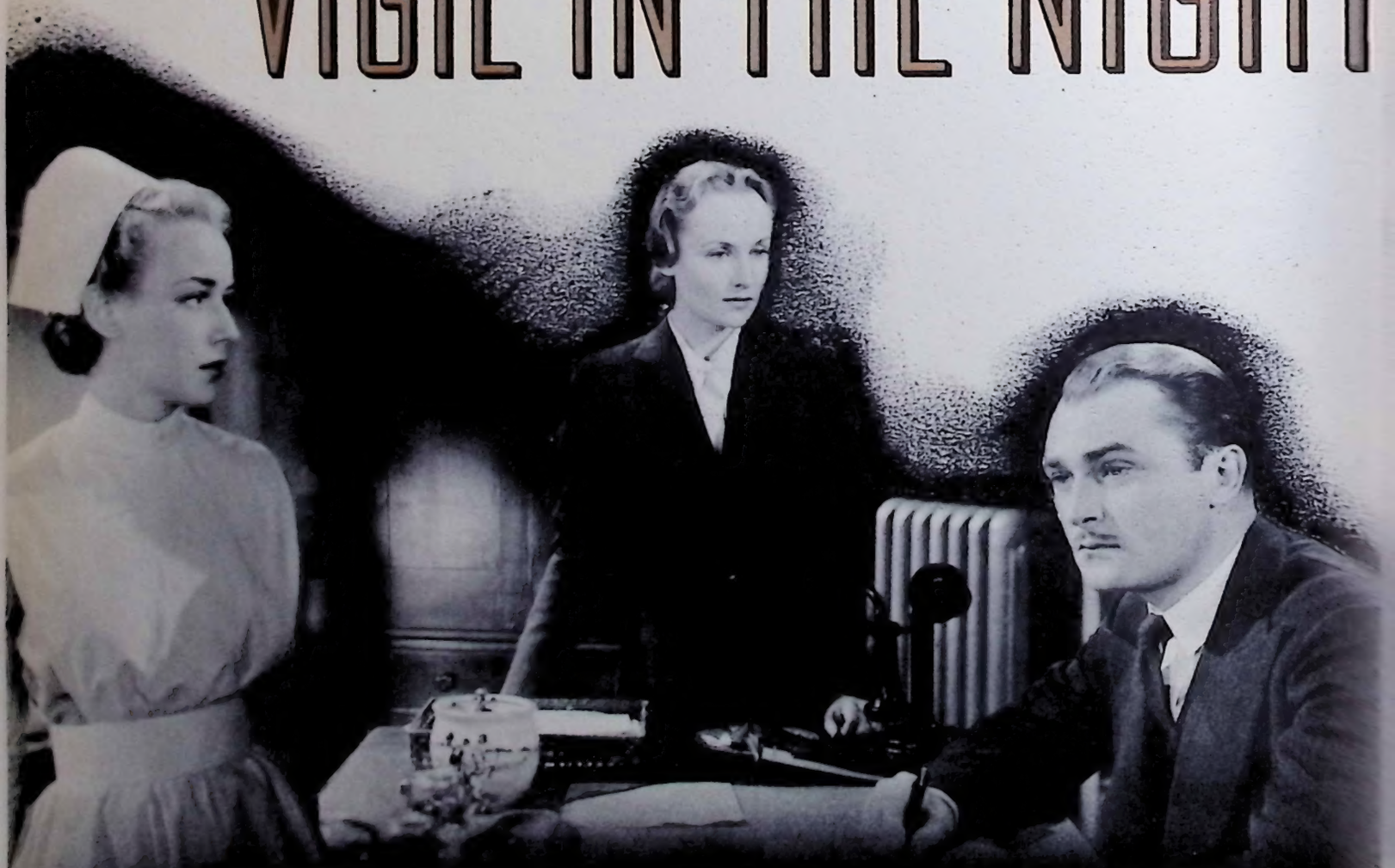
"VIGIL IN THE NIGHT



with JULIEN MITCHELL • ROBERT COOTE • BRENDA FORBES • PETER CUSHING
Produced and Directed by the man who made 'Gunga Din' GEORGE STEVENS
PANDRO S. BERMAN In Charge of Production • RKO RADIO PICTURE

PICTURE PIONEER

WAY BACK WHEN!
From The Digest files: Oscar Hanson — in the good young days!

"GULLIVER" CONTEST

Halifax, N.S. — The Halifax newspapers, the Herald and the Mail, recently offered a prize for a drawing of "Gulliver", of "Gulliver's Travels", which will be seen shortly at the Capitol Theatre, Halifax, N.S. Thirty young people were awarded prizes which consisted of a guest ticket to the Capitol Theatre.

OPEN "STATE" THEATRE

Madawaska, Maine — The State Theatre, formerly the Roxy, has opened at Madawaska, Maine, under the management of the B. & L. Theatres (Messrs. Bernstein and Lieberman). Earl Roberts of Fort Kent is house manager. The theatre has a seating capacity of 450 and the town of Madawaska, a population of 4,000. A new R.C.A. equipment has been installed and it is planned to remodel the theatre this coming Spring.

"WIND" OPENS FEB. 16

Winnipeg, Man. — In from Toronto J. J. Fitzgibbons (F.P.) announced that "Gone With the Wind" will be shown in Winnipeg, starting Friday, Feb. 16. The film, in technicolor, runs nearly four hours, and two performances a day will be shown, with an added matinee Saturday morning.

"MAITLAND" TAKEN OVER

Toronto, Ont. — Theatre Holding Corporation has taken over the Maitland Theatre at Ingersoll, Ontario. Manager is A. C. Simpson who has been with the company for the past eight years, and was formerly assistant manager at the Hollywood Theatre, Toronto.

ENTWISTLE IN CALGARY

Calgary, Alta. — Recent visitor to Calgary was Mr. Entwistle Sr., operator of theatres in Edmonton.

BROADWAY BUSINESS REPORTS

New York, N.Y. — Broadway has a run of holdovers. "Grapes of Wrath", Darryl Zanuck's filmization of the John Steinbeck best-seller, concerning the lives of the migratory workers of the dust bowl of California, is doing big business at the Rivoli Theatre and now in its third week.

Warner's "The Fighting 69th" is doing excellent business at the Strand. M-G-M's "Shop Around the Corner" played to a good two-week's business at the Music Hall. "Gone With The Wind" in its 8th week at the Capitol and Astor Theatres, is doing capacity business at the Astor and a reported $72,000 for the Capitol last week.

HOST 2,400 CHILDREN

Vancouver, B.C.—Four Vancouver business men played host (anonymously) to 2,400 of the city's less fortunate children at the Windsor Theatre (F.P.) here. "Wizard of Oz" was the film shown. Organizations handled the distribution of the tickets.

CONCILIATION MEETING

Halifax, N.S. — Attending a meeting of the Conciliation Board from Saint John, N.B., were R. G. March and A. E. Smith of Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and Regal Films Limited.

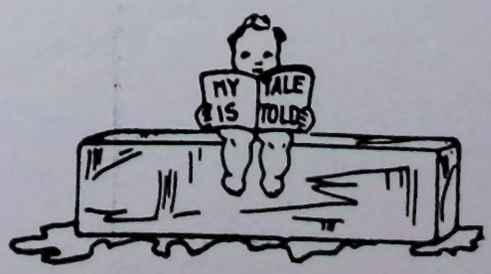
RAY PRESENTS

(*Continued from Page 3*)

to lease or offer to lease it without first giving the exhibitor at or before the time of making the offer an accurate synopsis of the contents of the film. No producer can use the name of a book, or a play, or a title as a selling angle. The adaptation or story with the title must be written in order to furnish the exhibitor with a synopsis before there is any sales offer involved. In addition, the synopsis must be a part of the lease, it must contain an outline of the story, descriptions of the general characters, a statement describing the general manner of treatment of dialogues concerning and scenes depicting vice, crime, or suggestive or sexual passion.

IT is this Sec. 4. which has been the bait to catch the women's organizations. They have been repeatedly told that the reason for sexy or crime pictures is due to the fact that the innocent exhibitor is never told what is in the picture, he is forced to buy blindly and in block. "Now if he only was told in advance he would eliminate from his program all pictures dealing with crime, vice, suggestive or sexual passion." That is what the women's associations are told, but we know that there is not one word of truth in this alibi. The theatre is no different than the newspaper; eliminate the headline stories which deal with crime, vice, passions and what would happen to circulation?

Exhibitors may be interested in controlling crime pictures, or pictures with a vice angle, the latter number which is so negligible that they do not count, but what picture patron, or what exhibitor will truthfully tell you that he or she is not entertained or interested in a picture dealing with suggestive or sexual passions? The punishment for violation of the clauses is a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars, or not exceeding one year in prison, or both in the discretion of the Court. The several district Courts, the various district attorneys all have the power to prevent and restrain in their respective districts. What a grand political party that would be. The exhibitors are asking for it, so they had better get "crying rooms" ready for themselves, because if that Neely Bill passes the House of Representatives, the exhibitor and the producer-distributor will be running his business under the supervision of district courts and district crown attorneys, plus women's associations.



M-G-M's "Balalaika" Introduces Ilona Massey "The Fighting 69th" Powerful War Drama

"BALALAIKA"

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER

THERE is no thrill a reviewer enjoys more than the discovery of a new star worthy of all the superlatives an imaginative mind can conjure. In Ilona Massey, blonde importation from Hungary, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has a star who this reviewer predicts, at the risk of being dubbed sacreligious, or just plain "nuts", will topple Metro's own singing star from the well-established throne at the head of the screen's songbirds.

Miss Massey made a brief appearance in "Rosalie", singing one number. She was then wisely withdrawn from the active list until she had mastered the English language. Now she victoriously emerges from obscurity to take the audiences of the world by storm. She has nearly every attribute necessary to the success of a screen nightingale. To the eye, she is a vision of blonde loveliness, fair of face, and with a figure such as Boccaccio must have dreamed-of, when writing his "Decameron Tales". In addition, she possesses a classic soprano voice that equals the screen's best, and she is equally effective at putting across an operatic aria, as a provocative cafe number.

In addition to the Magyar thrush, "Balalaika" stars Canada's choice as Monarch of the Screen, Nelson Eddy, in his most convincing screen performance in many months. Eddy is no juvenile, and too often he has been cast in roles which, while affording him ample opportunity to display his vocal talent, didn't suit him otherwise. "Balalaika" not only shows off his voice, but provides him with a plausible characterization, as well. This is one of his best performances.

A large cast of featured players lends brilliant support to the two stars. Heading these are Charlie Ruggles and Frank Morgan, handling the comedy element. Ruggles is surprisingly good as Eddy's army orderly, and later as proprietor of a swank Russian restaurant in Paris. Morgan has one of his stock assignments as impressario of the Imperial Russian Opera, later doorman at Ruggles' restaurant. C. Aubrey Smith plays a Russian general, and Eddy's father, and Lionel Atwill is Miss Massey's father. Dalies Frantz, a newcomer, scores briefly as Miss Massey's brother, and Joyce Compton is effective as Ruggles' light-o'-love. Others include Walter Woolf King, Phillip Terry, Paul Sutton, Alma Kruger, Abner Biberman, Willy Costello. Mildred Shay, briefly spotted, is beauteous to behold.

Plot has Nelson Eddy a Prince of Imperial Russia, and a captain of the famous Cossacks. Back from manoeuvres, he sees and hears Ilona Massey singing at the "Balalaika", favorite wining and dining spot of the officers, but he is so smitten that he masquerades as a humble voice-student, in order to get in her good graces. In spite of herself, Ilona finds herself liking this strange young man, and by virtue of his voice, he puts himself across with her father and brother, who are mixed up with the revolutionists. Eddy succeeds in keeping his real identity a secret, until one day Ilona's brother is haranguing a crowd in the streets, and the Cossacks, under Eddy, are ordered to break up the meeting. In the ensuing fight, the brother is killed, and Ilona learns of Eddy's masquerade. They pledge their troth anew, when Eddy offers to resign from the army in order to marry her, but the World War breaks out, and Eddy is called away. Three years of fighting, and the Red Revolution. Armistice and the post-war period finds Eddy and his friends in Paris, many of them employed in Charlie Ruggles' "Balalaika" restaurant, Eddy's father as wine-stewart, the former Imperial Opera impressario as doorman, and Eddy himself as an entertainer, still carrying a torch for the absent Ilona. On the Russian New Year's Eve, the roles in the restaurant are reversed, the former nobles assume their former rank, while Charlie Ruggles again waits on them. And to make the ending happy, Ilona turns up at the restaurant, and is re-united with Eddy.

There is more to the story than that, what with attempted assassinations, performances at the Opera, etc., etc., but the above synopsis touches on most of the highspots. Only drawback to the story is its Russian paternity, which is rather in disrepute right at this time. Of course the story deals with Holy Russia, and not Stalin-land, but there is that angle to watch out for.

Production is particularly lavish, with Lawrence Weingarten and crew going overboard to make this the most sumptuous musical of recent months. It is too bad, though, that Metro couldn't see their way clear to producing it in Technicolor, for if ever a picture lent itself to the color camera, this is the picture. In Technicolor, it would have been breath-taking, as it is, it can only be dubbed, superb.

Reinhold Schunzel's direction is all that could be asked for, and all other technical departments have been equally well taken care of.

Running time—102 minutes.

"THE FIGHTING 69th"

WARNER BROTHERS

IN Manhattan, and around Greater New York, including Brooklyn, the Bronx, etc., the term, "The Fighting Irish" brings to many minds not a picture of Notre Dame's famed gridiron warriors, but New York's own ace Irish regiment, which went to France in 1917, and became known as the "Fighting 69th". Around the factual exploits of this famed body of American fighting men, and with certain fictional additions necessary for an entertaining production, Norman Reilly Raine, Fred Niblo, Jr., and Dean Franklin have fashioned a screenplay that with the help of a first-rate cast and direction, becomes a powerful war picture with the dramatic punch, and pathos of "Angels With Dirty Faces".

The character portrayed by James Cagney is a fictional addition, while the majority of the others had their real-life counterparts. Cagney portrays one of those wise-guy recruits, similar to his roles in the popular cycle of service pictures a couple of years back. His role here is more despicable than ever before, for in addition to his rule-breaking, insubordination, etc., his cowardice under fire results in the death of several of his comrades. He builds up such an animosity throughout the picture, that his final regeneration comes too late to save him from anything but the death-in-action ending the script provides. His performance incidentally, ranks among his best.

Pat O'Brien, once more plays the role of a Roman Catholic priest, the regiment's beloved fighting padre, "Father Duffy". His performance equals that of "Angels With Dirty Faces". George Brent is excellent as the major of the outfit, "Wild Bill" Donovan, and Jeffrey Lynn scores in his too-few scenes, as Joyce Kilmer, the celebrated poet-author of "Trees".

Others include Alan Hale as a typical Yankee sergeant, Frank McHugh providing most of the laughs, Dennis Morgan as "Lieut. Ames", Henry O'Neill as the Colonel, and John Litel, Dick Foran, William Lundigan, Harvey Stephens, Guinn Williams, and many more. Sammy Cohen does an outstanding bit as the Jewish boy who changed his name to "Mike Murphy" in order to join the regiment. The scene where dying, he asks "Father Duffy" to administer the last rites, is as tearful as any you would want to see.

Directed by William Keighley.

Running time—89 minutes.